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SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/05/18

TAGS: PBTS KNNP ASEC PREL PGOV UZ

SUBJECT: Uzbekistan: Customs Officials Pleased with Commodity Identification Training

REF: TASHKENT 150; STATE 27549

CLASSIFIED BY: Steven Prohaska, Second Secretary, State, Pol-Econ;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: U.S., Kazakh, and Uzbek instructors jointly conducted a Weapons of Mass Destruction Commodity Identification Training (WMD CIT) workshop for Uzbekistan's Customs officials at the Higher Military Customs Institute in Tashkent on May 6-8. The workshop marked a further step in re-engagement with the Government of Uzbekistan under the auspices of the International Nonproliferation Export Control Program (INECP), which had stalled here in 2005. Uzbek participants were highly attentive and involved and gave the course high marks for its relevance to Customs activities, with one senior official outlining several additional areas Customs would be interested in receiving further training on. The Government of Uzbekistan appears highly receptive to further INECP activities down the road. End summary.

Commodity Identification Training Kicks Off

¶2. (SBU) On May 6-8, technical experts from the U.S., Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan conducted a three-day Weapons of Mass Destruction Commodity Identification Training (WMD CIT) workshop in Tashkent with the support of the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program. This workshop was a follow-on to our positive counterproliferation discussions in February with Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) officials (reftel A), and was intended to enhance the ability of Uzbekistan's law enforcement officers to visually identify materials and commodities that can be used in the production of WMD and missile systems as well as to strengthen its export control enforcement in preventing the spread of WMD. The Government of Uzbekistan agreed to Post's request to use the Higher Military Customs Institute as the venue for this training. Though we invited participants from both the State Customs Committee and Border Guards of the National Security Service, only Customs officials (about 20 officers) accepted the invitation.

¶13. (SBU) James Noble from the Department of Energy gave opening remarks to the class on May 6, noting that despite a hiatus of several years, bilateral counterproliferation cooperation under the auspices of the International Nonproliferation Export Control Program (INECP) had now resumed. (Note: INECP activities stalled in 2005. End note.) In addition to being a comprehensive overview of technologies of proliferation concern, the course would be conducted in Russian to encourage greater interaction between participants. He introduced his colleagues, which included Tatyana Colgan of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Dmitriy Bogomolov of Kazakhstan's Institute of Atomic Energy, and Tamara Tajibaeva of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Justice as well as technical experts Vitality Petrenko and Sadreddin Jalilov of Uzbekistan's Institute of Nuclear Physics.

¶14. (SBU) After an introductory overview of Commodity Identification Training, the instructors proceeded through a variety of modules on nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons; missile systems and subsystems; structural materials; metals; fabricated components; industrial equipment; electronic equipment. They interspersed practical exercises on valves, capacitors, and chemicals throughout the classroom instruction. Toward the end of the training, the Uzbek Customs officials demonstrated their knowledge with active participation in a test on identifying dual-use goods. James Noble remarked to Poloff that the Uzbek participants had been extremely interested and involved in the course relative to other previous groups of students, and had posed numerous questions during the modules, during breaks, and at the end of the course.

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Uzbekistan Appreciative of Training, Interested in More

¶15. (C) During a roundtable at the conclusion of the workshop, the Uzbek participants offered their thoughts on the training and additional engagement. One official expressed his gratitude to all the instructors and to the Embassy for its support, and noted that they had learned a lot about commodity identification and WMD during the course. Furthermore, Customs will use the information provided in this workshop in its future work. He stated that Customs is interested in further cooperation in this field and similar workshops in the future, and asserted that the U.S. and Uzbekistan should jointly combat WMD. Another senior Customs officer also praised the workshop as being "useful" and "a good step forward," and expressed his pleasure that such activities are taking place again. He outlined additional areas that he hoped additional training courses could address, which included: information about illicit traffickers; sources of dual-use goods; how and where illicit traffickers are able to procure nuclear materials on the black market; how traffickers hide and smuggle suspect materials and falsify documents; what steps countries should take after interdicting materials of proliferation concern; and methodologies on how to conduct investigations. EXBS Advisor replied that a U.S.-sponsored International Border Interdiction Training course that touched on some of these issues had been conducted for selected GOU officials recently in Termez, and that materials from this course could be provided to the GOU. Other courses also could address these matters. (Note: Only one of the Uzbek participants present had been at the Termez training. We plan to hand over surplus educational materials from this course during an upcoming meeting with GOU officials. End note.) The Customs officer responded enthusiastically about the prospects for further collaboration.

Comment:

¶6. (C) Counterproliferation re-engagement with the Government of Uzbekistan under the INECP is off to a very promising start. We were pleased that the GOU provided its own facilities as the venue for the training, and the favorable reception that the trainers received suggests that Customs will welcome the follow-up training workshop in March 2010. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has recently relayed Uzbekistan's interest in additional INECP activities such as the deployment of XRF metal analyzers in the country later this year. Despite the longstanding rivalry between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the Uzbek participants did not appear to have been put off by the fact that two of the instructors openly stated that they work for the Government of Kazakhstan. The use of Kazakh instructors (and a native Russian speaker from Pacific Northwest National Laboratory) in fact allowed this course to be conducted almost exclusively in Russian, which not only facilitated the coverage of more material than would have been possible in English subsequently translated into Russian, but also was effective in encouraging broad and active engagement from the Uzbek participants.

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